

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 05229 231002Z
ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 5229

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: KS US
SUBJECT: ALLEGED BUGGING OF BLUE HOUSE

REF: A) SEOUL 5155; B) SEOUL 5182 C) STATE 144318

SUMMARY: VICE FOREIGN MINISTER RAISED ALLEGED BLUE HOUSE
BUGGING WITH DCM, CITES VENEZUELA CASE AND REQUESTS LETTER
FROM USG DENYING BUGGING. END SUMMARY

1. DURING CONVERSATION WITH DCM AT MOFA JUNE 23, VICE FOREIGN
MINISTER YUN HA-CHONG RAISED STORY IN NEW YORK TIMES (NYT)
REGARDING ALLEGATIONS THAT USG HAD EAVESDROPPED ELECTRONICALLY
ON BLUE HOUSE CONVERSATIONS AND ASKED IF USG COULD NOT EITHER
DENY ALLEGATIONS PUBLICLY OR AT VERY LEAST SEND LETTER TO
ROKG DENYING ALLEGATIONS. YUN SAID NATIONAL ASSEMBLYMEN HAD
POINTED OUT THAT USG HAD SENT LETTER TO VENEZUELA
GOVERNMENT DENYING BUGGING ALLEGATIONS AND THAT THIS HAD
ENDED NEWS STORIES ABOUT BUGGING IN VENEZUELA. NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY WAS, ACCORDING TO YUN, ASKING EMBARRASSINGLY
POINTED QUESTIONS ABOUT WHY ROKG WAS NOT EXTENDED SIMILAR
COURTESY BY USG. YUN EXPRESSED HIS PERSONAL BELIEF THAT
IF USG PUBLICLY DENIED BUGGING ALLEGATIONS OR AT LEAST
SENT LETTER TO ROKG DENYING THEM, NEWS STORIES WHICH SERVE
TO DRIVE WEDGE BETWEEN USG AND ROKG WOULD BE UNDERMINED
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AND WOULD CEASE.

2. DCM REPLIED HE WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH DETAILS OR
CIRCUMSTANCES OF VENEZUELAN CASE BUT NOTED THAT IT WAS
IN NATURE OF NEWSPAPER BUSINESS TO WRITE STORIES FOR
SENSATIONAAL VALUE THEY MIGHT HAVE AND THAT PUBLIC DENIAL
OR WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SEEMED UNLIKELY TO TERMINATE THIS

SORT OF STORY. DCM POINTED OUT WE FIND IT DISTURBING THAT ROKG IS APPARENTLY PREPARED TO ACCEPT IMPLICATION THAT ORAL COMMUNICATION FROM AMBASSADOR OR ASSISTANT SECRETARY IS SOMEHOW LESS VALUABLE OR LESS RELIABLE THAN WRITTEN COMMUNICATION. DCM ALSO SUGGESTED THAT ROKG DO ITS BEST TO IGNORE THESE STORIES AND URGE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO DO LIKEWISE IN VIEW OF PROMPT AND UNEQUIVOCAL ORAL DENIAL PROVIDED BY AMBASSADOR AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY.

3. COMMENT: WE HAVE NOT YET AND DO NOT INTEND TO ENCOURAGE ROKG TO BELIEVE THEY CAN EXPECT ANY MORE FROM US ON BUGGING QUESTION. NONETHELESS IT IS CLEAR THAT IN PRESENT ATMOSPHERE OF GREATLY RELAXED RESTRICTIONS ON PUBLIC DEBATE,ROKG FEELS MORE INTENSELY PRESSURE FROM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND MEDIA AND HAS, THEREFORE, CORRESPONDINGLY GREATER NEED FOR AMMUNITION TO USE IN PUBLIC DEBATE THAN WAS CASE AT TIME OF EARLIER ALLEGATIONS OF U.S. BUGGING IN DECEMBER 1976.
END COMMENT

4. ACTION REQUEST: WOULD APPRECIATE ANY DETAILS AND GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT CAN PROVIDE REGARDING VENEZUELA CASE MENTIONED BY VICE MINISTER. EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE WRITTEN COMMUNICATION IS NECESSARY IN CASE OF KOREANS (UNLESS CONDITIONS IN VENEZUELA WERE IDENTICAL). WE WOULD LIKE, HOWEVER, TO BE IN POSITION TO PROVIDE ROKG WITH ARGUMENTATION WHICH COULD BE USED IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE
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REFUTING ATTEMPT TO DRAW PARALLEL BETWEEN KOREAN AND VENEZUELAN SITUATION AND REFUTING ASSUMPTION THAT ADDITIONAL ACTION BY USG COULD SOMEHOW END NEWS STORIES ON THIS SUBJECT.
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